

SDMCP, MFSO AND GI FIGHTBACK PRESENT:

THE HOME FRONT NEWS

SERVING FREE MINDS

OCTOBER 2004

WHO WE ARE

This is the first edition of a new newsletter for active duty service members and families in the San Diego area. *The Home Front News* is a joint effort of the San Diego chapter of Military Families Speak Out (SDMFSO), San Diego Military Counseling Project (SDMCP) and gifightback.org.

Military Families Speak Out is an organization of people who are opposed to the war in Iraq and who have relatives or loved ones in the military. MFSO has chapters and contacts around the world. The San Diego chapter has participated actively in local peace movement activities.

San Diego Military Counseling Project provides service members with information about rights and discharges. Since November, 2003, SDMCP has been the San

Diego area affiliate of the GI Rights Hotline. SDMCP aims to help service members understand and exercise their rights so that they can effectively speak out about the war and other issues that affect them.

GI Fightback is a website that aims to be a resource for military people and their families that want to fight back and oppose war.

We are excited about starting this new newsletter. Too many people believe that, just because service members have been sent to fight, that they have an obligation to support the war. Actually, many members and their families oppose the war and believe that the best support for them is to bring them home now.



Picture is of a Tomahawk missile taken by a sailor during the initial strike of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The Home Front News provides an avenue both for expressing the viewpoints of these active duty service members and families, and for providing information that can help people use military regulations to meet their own needs.

More information about these groups is available on their websites, www.mfso.org, www.sdmcp.org and www.gifightback.org.

WHY SPEAK OUT?

No one asks servicemembers about their opinions before they are shipped off to war. And no one consults with their families about whether the sacrifices they are asked to make are worth it.

Instead, it works the other way: they are told that their sacrifices are necessary so that the prices paid by others will not have been in vain.

But what happens when the reasons for going to war turn out to be false? When the "liberators" are regarded as occupiers and enemies by the citizens of a country that posed no threat to the US? When every act of war turns more people against us and makes the war last longer?

Do we just shut up and do what we're told? No matter how many die? No matter how deep a hole policy-makers dig?

When war turns out to be based on

lies, when lives are lost and families are shattered for no good reason, there is no stronger or more compelling voice than servicemembers and families. When a policy of war needs to be turned around, they—we—speak with unmatched authority.

Far too many people believe that they have no choice, that opposing war means betraying the troops. But it's the opposite that's true: continuing to send men and women to kill and die in a wrong war is a betrayal. Demanding that the war be stopped is the truest, most loyal act in the memory of those already lost.

And there is no one better suited to make that demand than we are. If we speak out, clearly and forcefully, America will learn that those asked to bear the greatest burden, pay the highest price, object. And our numbers are growing.

Many feel that they can't speak out, that the risks are too great, that they feel too isolated and too vulnerable. But there are ways. And the more who do speak out—in whatever way they can—the more who will see that they are not alone.

In America's last major wrong war, Vietnam, military servicemembers became a major voice in convincing the country that the troops had to come home. It can happen again. Then it took years before servicemembers began to speak out in large numbers. In Iraq, it's happening already. We need to do what we can to encourage and help that process along.

The Home Front News will do just that. We can't wait 2,4 or 10 years for the government to come to its senses. We want our troops to come home now!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Insider's Point of View	2
As Families See it	2
Platoon in Iraq Refuses Orders	2
Message from Fernando	3
Links and Resources	3
Upcoming Events	4
Know Your Rights	4
Subscribe/ Contact Us	4

AN INSIDER'S POINT OF VIEW



Tomahawk missile being fired off into the night Iraqi sky.

A FAMILY PERSPECTIVE

When I met my husband he was still proud to serve his country and his people to the point of sacrificing months away from us out in a life-threatening mission. Yet, after some months of deployment and further extensions, and facing the prospects of being involved in a chemical war without protection, he started to question himself. The idea of losing his life out there, while his family was waiting for him, started to torture him. Only then we realized that we were being as much victims as the Iraqi people, since our lives were always at stake every time we heard news from the White House and the United Nations Organization. A while has passed since then, and my husband came back home; however it is not the case for those 1000 soldiers that will never make it. What is worse, with the possibility of the so called weapons of mass destruction being a false excuse for invasion, exposing the lives of our loved ones the way they are doing is far from being honorable, it is cruel and aggravating. As a matter of fact, I personally don't enjoy the fact that my family is at stake and it makes us live in fear, since we cannot trust our government or our media to get an accurate view of reality and freely decide if we want to expose the lives of our loved ones just for the sheer ambition of a few.

There's a serious problem in our world today. That problem is the widespread acceptance of misinformation as doctrine, perpetuated by US journalism. I am a US Navy sailor and I was there when the US swindled the American people into believing that an invasion of a country that posed absolutely no threat to the US was justifiable. This was a task easily accomplished through the medium of television. People don't read enough or think for themselves I suppose. But people do rely upon the television to come to their political conclusions. I must admit, while I was stationed in the Northern Arabian Gulf with countless other US Navy ships poised for destruction, I had my eyes affixed upon the glorious transmissions of CNN. Praying for a glimpse of something, that could allow myself to justify my participation in such an obvious charade, I fooled myself into believing that what we were actually doing was liberating a people from a dictator, a consort of terrorists.

Now that I am home, with my brand new family, I am able to discern the truth from the lies radiated through the airways. It doesn't take a political analyst to see that the US has no business in

Iraq, other than the business of financial gain. Everyday American men and women in the armed forces are being victimized. Forced to give up their lives in the name of freedom and democracy not to mention being forced to kill countless innocents in the process. The American propaganda machine irresponsibly tosses the word insurgent in our faces. It infuriates me to think that the media thinks that I am foolish enough to believe that people defending themselves from an invading force could be considered rebels.

Please, take a moment to reflect upon the picture you see on the left. I took this picture from the weather deck of my ship with my 35mm camera. This is just one of the thousands of land attack missiles shot from Navy vessels in the middle of the night in 2003. What does this photo say to you? To me, a veteran of this travesty of a war, this photo exudes cowardice and it makes me sick to my stomach to think that I participated in this event, and may be called upon to participate similar events again in the near future, against my will.

I've heard the argument that the US has a duty, as the "world's

only superpower," to police it. This is such a testament to the state of confusion in this country. I completely understand that the US is a superpower in this world, but the US's role as the unique superpower should be of a different nature. The US's role as the "world's only superpower" should be to spread peace. Imagine the state the world would be in if the US spent the billions it spent on the war on something like medicine and water treatment for underdeveloped countries? If the US developed a reputation for these kinds of actions, then terrorists would have to find another target. This is how you win the so called war on terror. It's not difficult to see that the US is burning a lot of international bridges right now. But they can be rebuilt with diplomacy.

To anyone that took the time to read my contribution, I urge you to find out the truth about what's going on in your world today. The television will only mislead you. There are many resources available that provide unbiased information, some of which are outlined in this newsletter.

Thank you.

PLATOON IN IRAQ REFUSES ORDERS

On Oct. 13th a platoon with the 343rd Quartermaster Company refused orders to convoy fuel in a situation that the reserve soldiers considered a "suicide mission". The 17 soldiers said that their vehicles were unsafe due to improper maintenance and a lack of armor.

The mission was to transport fuel about 200 miles through hostile territory. Usually when deployed the platoon was escorted by helicopters and armed Humvees but according to Spc. Amber McClenny there was no escort this time.

Jackie Butler wife of Sgt. Michael Butler, a 24-year reservist. "I got a call from an officer in another unit early Oct. 14 who told me that my husband and his platoon had been arrested on a bogus charge because they refused to go on a suicide mission," she said "When my husband refuses to follow an order, it has to be something major."

U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson said, "This situation brings into question the larger policy issue as to whether our soldiers are in properly equipped vehicles"

Since the beginning of the invasion of Iraq stories have been coming out about the lack of training the lack of equipment. We've heard about families having to buy body armor for their relatives in Iraq and send it to them.

These soldiers, men and women undersupplied, unprotected, pushed to the limit, did what they needed to do to protect them selves.

To keep up on this and other troop news go to GI Fightback on the web, www.gifightback.org

A MESSAGE FROM GUERRERO AZTECA (BILINGUAL)

This message is from Fernando Suarez Del Solar. His son was one of the first marines killed in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Mr. Suarez has been an outspoken critic of Bush's war policies.

En Espanol

¿Por qué es importante MFSO? Porque es un lugar donde los padres, hermanos, esposas, etc, podemos ayudarnos mutuamente a los muchos problemas que representan tener a nuestros seres queridos en la guerra, recordemos que muchos de ellos regresan aparentemente salvos, mas no así sanos. Regresan y al cabo de un corto tiempo empiezan a mostrar síntomas del trauma de posguerra, y el gobierno, la mayoría de las veces, no les da la ayuda adecuada, es aquí donde MFSO entra en acción, es aquí que con la fuerza de la unidad podemos ayudarnos y alzar nuestras voces demandando atención adecuada y pronta a nuestros seres queridos. Tambien podemos participar en un foro, donde nuestras voces pueden ser escuchadas y así demandar el termino de la guerra en Irak y el regreso de nuestras tropas. Un gran número de soldados regresan de la guerra en condiciones deplorables, ya sea heridos, mutilados, o traumatizados. Si sus familias no estan preparadas para brindarles ayuda sera difícil que puedan sanar sus heridas. Desgraciadamente, el gobierno no nos enseña la forma como podemos ayudarlos, pero entre nosotros podemos aprender con ayuda de psicólogos y terapeutas civiles especializados. Invito a todas las familias que tienen algun miembro en el ejercito a que se unan nosotros, a MFSO-SD, y así podamos ayudarnos a ayudar a nuestros seres queridos en el servicio militar./

English Version

Why is MFSO important? Because it is the place where parents, brothers, wives, etc can help each other with the different problems we may encounter as we have our loved ones in war, remember that many of them come back from the battle field in apparent physical normality, yet not emotionally sound. After a short period from their arrival they may start showing symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Unfortunately, in most of the cases our soldiers do not receive any help from the government to achieve the treatment they require. It is in those cases that MFSO wants to take action. We believe that there is strength in numbers. Therefore, we can help each other by raising our voices to call the attention upon our loved ones' needs. Furthermore, we can take part in a foro and express our desire for the war in Iraq to end and our troops to come back. A great number of soldiers that come back from war do it in deplorable conditions, they have been hurt, traumatized, etc and if their families are not prepared to help them, it is impossible for them to heal their wounds. It is a shame that no help to prepare their families to cope with such situation comes from the government. Not with standing, we can help each other to help our love ones resorting to psychologists and specialists. I invite all people with a family member in the military to join MFSO and find mutual support.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

San Diego Coalition for Peace and Justice

www.sdcpj.org
619-263-9301

San Diego Peace Resource Center

619-263-9301
prcsandiego@igc.org

Ocean Beach Grass Roots Organization

www.obgo.org
(619) 801-0770

North County Coalition for Peace and Justice

www.nccpj.org

San Diego Vets for Peace

www.sdvfp.org
jimbrown@sdvfp.org

Guerrero Azteca

www.guerreroazteca.org

Iraq Veterans Against the War

www.ivaw.net

United for Peace and Justice

www.unitedforpeace.org



GI Rights Hotline

www.girights.objector.org
800-394-9544

Vets for Peace (National)

www.vetsforpeace.org

Traveling Soldier

www.traveling-soldier.org

Military Families Speak Out (National)

www.mfso.org

UPCOMING EVENTS OF SDMFSO

Sunset, 1st Sunday of Each Month:

Vigil for the Fallen

Remembering the casualties of war

Help read the names of U.S. troops lost

Light a candle in honor of the dead

Visual memorial of U.S. and Iraqi lives lost

Join us on Sunday, November 7th at Sunset, the corner of 6th and Laurel in Balboa Park.

*Each life is precious, A gift not to be squandered,
The Universe to those who loved him.*

Upcoming vigil dates:

Sunday, December 5th, Sunday, January 2nd, Sunday, February 6th

PTSD and Family Readiness:

Dr. Lorri Greene, Ph.D., will help us understand

What PTSD is and how its treated

How to recognize the problem and give support

What the obstacles are to getting help

Join us at the San Diego Public Library in Mission Valley

Dr. Greene's presentation will be followed by plenty of time for questions and discussion.

for more information, or to reserve your spot, please call 619-521-1865 Or email us: bringthemhome@hotmail.com

The Library neither endorses nor sponsors this group or its services

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Members of the military often believe that they have no rights, especially, no right to speak out against policies they disagree with. But while active duty personnel are restricted in some ways that civilians are not, there are significant rights that are protected by regulation.

For example, DoD Directive 1325.6, Guidelines for Handling Dissent and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces, provides:

Commanders may require prior approval for literature to be distributed on military installations, but mere possession of literature may not be prohibited. This means that you can have literature of your own choosing for yourself. But your literature can be impounded if your commander determines that an attempt will be made to distribute it. This is often

interpreted to mean that you can have one copy of a particular piece of literature, but possession of multiple copies may result in the literature being impounded.

You can write and publish an underground newspaper if you do it while off-base and off duty, and you use your own that is, not the military's) equipment and money. However, if the newspaper contains statements that are punishable under federal law (like counseling insubordination, desertion or refusal of duty), you could be disciplined.

You can attend, participate in and speak at public protests and demonstrations in the U.S. as long as you are off-base, off-duty, out of uniform, the demonstration is legal, and

violence is not likely to result.

Not every commander knows these rights, and some think they can do whatever they want. And there are articles of the UCMJ that impose limits on speech (disrespect, disloyal statements, communicating with the enemy, etc.). But you do have a right to read and express opinions critical of government policy.

It is, of course, possible that your command will not appreciate your opinions, whether you have a right to express them or not, and there are ways to protect your rights if someone tries to prevent you from exercising them. More on that in another column.

Know Your Rights is a regular feature of "The Home Front News". If you have questions you would like to have answered send an e-mail to homefront@sdmcp.org. If you would like to see the answer in these pages, note "please answer in " The Home Front News."

YOU CAN ATTEND,
PARTICIPATE IN AND
SPEAK AT PUBLIC
PROTESTS AND
DEMONSTRATIONS IN
THE U.S.



To participate in **MFSO** meetings in San Diego call or e mail:

(619)-521-1865

bringthemhome@hotmail.com

SUBSCRIBE/CONTACT US

THE HOME FRONT NEWS AVAILABLE ON-LINE AT
WWW.GIFIGHTBACK.COM

We'll e-mail you issues when they come out subscribe by sending us e-mail homefront@sdmcp.org

Call the San Diego Military Counseling Project **(619) 692-3696**